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SERMON DCXXX.

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THE PORTION OF THE UNGODLY.

"Men of the world, which have their portion in this life."—PSALM xvii. 14.

It is a striking description of human depravity, which is given as a reason why the Spirit would not always strive with man, "that he also is flesh." Such is the predominance in man, as fallen, of the flesh over the Spirit—of the sensitive over the rational—that it sinks him from the dignity of his original, as made after the image of God, into a creature of flesh. But to man, as thus fallen, the Spirit of God is graciously given, by his secret and powerful insinuations of light and love, to strive with him; awakening him to the consideration of those divine glories which alone are answerable to his higher nature, and so recalling him to God and heaven. Those who yield to his influence are made partakers of his holiness, and so are named after him spiritual; while the rest are fleshly or carnal still: and the distinction thus formed passes over into the future world, and constitutes the elementary principle of eternal life or death. "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

The same distinction is marked in the Scriptures by the phrases, "sons of men," and "sons of God." "Men of the world," and "men of God." "O ye sons of men! how long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity and seek after leasing? But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself." The sons of men and the godly are here

spoken of in contrast with each other. So also our Saviour said to his disciples : " If ye were of the world, the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." This language marks a difference among men that is radical. It imports that the world are naturally in apostasy from God, and that those who are morally conformed to him, are not of the world ; but are formed to a new and heavenly character. The same thing is presented to us, in the passage which contains the text : " Deliver my soul," the Psalmist prays, " from the wicked, which are thy sword, from men which are thy hand, O Lord ; from men of the world, which have their portion in this life ; and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure : they are full of children and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness : I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." David found himself encompassed with enemies. They were " the wicked" men whose wickedness made them enemies to God as well as himself. They were " men of the world who had their portion in this life"—men who as they sought, received, their good things here—many of them were prosperous men; filled with hid treasures, and securely laying up for their children the possessions which themselves enjoyed : while he was encompassed with affliction. But he did not envy them. For a thousand times more than they enjoyed, he would not exchange conditions with them. The happiness which he sought was of another kind, and would remain when the world should have passed away. It would be found in Him who only hath immortality, and would be perfected when he and all men should awake from the slumbers of the grave. My brethren, there have always and every where been these two classes of men. While all naturally are of the world, there are those into whose minds the true light has shined ; those who have learned by faith to tread this world under their feet, in their aspirations after the glory that is to be revealed ; those who, under the trials of this life, have solaced themselves with the hope and the foretaste of what they are to enjoy in the future. To which of these classes we belong is a matter of infinite concern. Whatever we are, we must soon die, and accordingly as we shall have been men of the world, or men of God, will be our future destiny. God has suspended our state hereafter on our ultimate choice here. He has submitted to ourselves to decide whether, as men of the world we will have our portion here, or as men of God will seek it in the enjoyment of himself in heaven. " To them, who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honor, and immortality, he will render eternal life—and to men that are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation, and wrath, tribulation, and anguish."

That we may decide in this matter wisely, let us consider who are men of the world, and what is their portion.

I. Who are men of the world?

In general they are men who love the world as their chief good; who pursue it as the main thing; who depend upon it for their happiness, and consequently forsake God as the object of their supreme and ultimate delight and confidence. They are not, of course, profligate men; nor infidels, nor despisers of religion. They may be men of amiable feelings, and correct moral habits; they may be professed believers in the Gospel, and careful observers of its forms of worship; they may be considered by others, and consider themselves followers of Christ, and heirs of his kingdom; as the body of the Jews were professed worshippers of God, and in their own view, his peculiar people; and yet were pronounced by our Saviour to be men of the world. Men of the world are men who love the world, and so love it, as to be without the love of God.

But this is too general. It concerns us to understand how this leading disposition of the heart manifests itself.

I remark then more particularly:

1st. Men of the world are those whose thoughts tend to the things of the world. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." The thoughts, like the needle to the pole, are true to the governing affections of the heart. They may be diverted, as the needle may be turned from its standing point. The thoughts of worldly men may be arrested by overpowering considerations, and turned to God, or heaven, the judgment, or the eternal world, although most uncongenial to their chosen pursuits; but when left to their natural tendency, they will show by the character of their objects, what is the character of the man. "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, and they that are after the Spirit do mind the things of the Spirit." A spiritual mind, even in the midst of worldly occupations, delights often to rise in the contemplation of spiritual things; and so a worldly mind, in the midst of spiritual engagements—when the messages of grace are being addressed to the ear, or while prayer or praise employs the tongue, roves after worldly things. Of the blessed man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, it is said, that "his meditation is therein day and night;" while of the wicked it is said, "God is not in all his thoughts." "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men, that they are vanity."

2d. Men of the world are those whose feelings are excited mainly by the things of the world. The stirring emotions of men, as well as the current of their thoughts, ordinarily show where are their hearts. These of the men of the world cluster around those worldly interests which they regard as their chief

good. Their joys are enlivened, their hopes are raised, their fears are roused, or their griefs hang heavily on their hearts, just accordingly as success in a temporal view attends them, and their prospects are fair; or as dangers in regard to these thicken, or disappointment befalls them; while an unbroken stupidity reigns in their hearts, under all that can be said to them of God and Christ; of sin and redemption; of heaven and hell; of the claims of the Saviour's love, and the condition of a fallen world. Why is it thus? Not because these things are unknown, or their importance is disbelieved, or their own personal interest in them is seriously doubted. It is because their feelings, with their thoughts, are so absorbed by worldly pursuits, that spiritual and eternal things are unthought of, and so uncared for; are put away as though they belonged to a world of shadows, and so have no power over the sensibilities of the soul. Thus, according to the emphatical description of the Bible, they are "dead in trespasses and sins"—alive to the world, and dead to God; walking in the vanity of their minds, "having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts.

3dly. Men of the world are those whose conversation turns mainly on the things of the world. "They are of the world," John says of certain corrupt teachers, "therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them." Their social communication corresponds to their worldly spirit, and those who are of the same spirit are entertained by them, listen to them, and are persuaded by them. It must be so while men speak as they think and feel, and while the thoughts and feelings of worldly men are engrossed by worldly things. As our Saviour said to the Pharisees, "How can ye being evil speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart (the inner man) the mouth speaketh." "A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart"—the law of God written there; Christ dwelling there; the word of God treasured there; the light, and love, and joy, and hope of the Spirit reigning there, "bringeth forth good things;" "and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart"—selfish principles, envious feelings, vain imaginations—"bringeth forth evil things." A man's words may indeed, and often do, belie the feelings of his heart. His words may be smoother than oil, while his feelings are as drawn swords; or with the mouth he may draw near unto God, while his heart is far from him. But we now refer only to the free, unconstrained, habitual communications of men, and these will be found a true expression of their hearts, and accordingly to the very impressive declaration of our Saviour which I have just recited, he subjoins, "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

Those men whose social converse is habitually and characteristically worldly, whatever their professions or hopes may be, will be adjudged to be men of the world.

4thly. Their conduct is decided mainly by motives drawn from the world. Mankind are decided in their conduct by that which they regard as the chief good. To glorify God, and advance the cause of truth and holiness; to promote the great interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, and share in its immortal blessedness, is the commanding good in the view of some men, which habitually determines their choice and conduct, which carries them above those worldly influences that would draw them aside, and which sustains them in a patient course of well-doing amidst all discouragement and opposition. These are men of faith; men of God. Men of the world, on the other hand, as in respect to their thoughts, feelings, and words, so also in respect to their actions, are governed by the things of the world. Interest aways them, or honor bribes them, or pleasure throws her silken cords around them, and binds and governs them. They are slaves of the world, and consequently slaves of sin—of the avarice or ambition, of the lust or pride, of the selfish attachment or the bitter resentments, which the world excites and feeds. They pray or they restrain prayer; they are religious, or they neglect religion; they give or they withhold; they are just and true and faithful, or they are unjust, untrue, unfaithful; they are friends of temperance, learning, religion, and every good object, or they are indifferent or opposed to all these, just as in their view, some worldly end is to be gained by the one or the other; or if in particular cases they are decided by motives drawn from the eternal world, it is by constraint—it is in opposition to their governing affections, it is because they are afraid to live as their hearts would incline them; and this commonly is only for a season. In circumstances of trial, when the interests, the esteem, the splendor, and other gratifications of the world are set in competition with a good conscience towards God, their actions show which has the chief place in their hearts.

Such are men of the world. Making choice of the world as their chief good, their thoughts, their feelings, their words, and their main pursuits terminate on its interests and gratifications; and so in their hearts, they depart from the Lord, and their lives, fair and reputable as they may appear, are an unvarying course of apostasy: "for if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him." We are to consider,

II. Their portion. In general it is a portion in this life—a form of expression which implies that there is a life beyond the present, and that the men of the world have no portion there. They have here their good things. Having made choice of the world as their portion, and cleaved to it, this is their all. In the

nature of the case, it must be so. Having placed their affections on the world, they can enjoy no higher good. Removed from it, they have nothing left. They are morally disqualified for heaven : they are alienated from all that is most essential to the happiness of heaven : they have lived only to nurture the covetousness, pride, and other selfish principles which have arrayed them against the God of heaven, and are prepared only for the revolt and rebellion of hell. It must be so also according to the principles of the divine government. For a creature endowed with an intelligent and moral nature, to prefer a selfish and worldly good to the service and favor of God, is sinful, involves guilt, and calls for a retribution in wrath. "Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh ; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited."

In this light estimating the portion of the men of the world, we remark—1st. It is a very small portion, and this whether considered comparatively or absolutely—small manifestly when compared with the whole world—a small spot of ground—a small amount of treasure, a small store of knowledge—a small distinction of honor or sphere of influence—small also when compared with the measure of desires, for this is enlarged progressively with possession. It is a fever which, instead of being assuaged, is only inflamed by gratification, so that none are more eager of acquisition, or more dissatisfied with their condition, than those into whose bosom God pours his hid treasures. And if in this view small, how very small compared with Him in whom all fulness dwells—whom we were made to enjoy, and in whom we are freely offered an everlasting portion. It is absolutely as well as comparatively, since not all that is subject to one's command, but only that which ministers to his enjoyment, is properly his portion. "Behold," says Solomon, "that which I have seen. It is good, and comely for one to eat, and to drink, and enjoy the good of all his labor that he taketh under the sun, all the days of his life which God giveth him, for it is his portion." But how small a part of a man's possessions consists in that which he can eat, or drink, or apply in any other way to his personal enjoyment, except as it may be used by him in subservience to a better portion—his enjoyment in glorifying God, and doing good. All the rest is not his portion, but his encumbrance, and his care, perverted to the gratification of foolish and hurtful lusts, or applied by the overruling hand of God through him as a portion to others, his servants, his laborers, or his connections in society, or in business—a portion nominally less, perhaps, but often really more valuable, because conducive to a higher good, than his own.

2dly. It is an unsatisfying portion. It is unsatisfactory because it is so limited. The mind was made for the enjoyment of God—the infinite good; and cannot be satisfied with meaner things. So experience has a thousand times decided, as in the case of Solomon, after the longest trial and the best advantages. The richest confluence of worldly good, with the highest wisdom in applying it, is infinitely too limited to give rest to a mind, made after God's image, for communion with God. It is unsatisfying, also, because it is alloyed. Worldly good is not unmixed, and ordinarily those who have the greatest abundance have cares and anxieties proportionably great. The seasons mock their cherished hopes; the changes of trade break their golden dreams; the moth consumes, or rust corrupts, or wind, or hail, or fire, or rain, or floods destroy their wealth. Or if riches increase, they are increased that eat them, and they also that invade them—and they who are needed to gather and secure them: and the disappointments, perplexities and losses, occasioned by the unfaithfulness, or the incompetency, or the misfortunes of those on whom they depend, or other causes innumerable, which no wisdom can foresee or prevent. Faith may cast these burdens upon the Lord: but the men of the world have no arm on which to cast them—they must themselves bear them, and the humble poor with their limited means and lighter cares, little know how oppressive these often are. But more especially unsatisfying is worldly good, because it cannot meet the wants and woes of men as sinful, dying, and accountable. "Hear this, all ye people," the word of God impressively calls: "give ear all ye inhabitants of the world: both low and high: rich and poor together. They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches: none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, that he should live forever and not see corruption." Not all his treasure can buy off disease, or break the violence of pain: or bribe away the messenger of death: or solace the pangs of separation, or heal the guilty conscience, or dispel the horrors of the tomb. It is totally inadequate for those wants compared with which all others are unworthy of an anxious thought. It leaves their possessors as it finds them, fallen, guilty, perishing, exposed daily to death and judgment, and therefore wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Instead of relieving, it aggravates their real maladies. It elates them with the pride of self-sufficiency, and hides from them their real wretchedness, and so prevents their becoming truly rich, until at last their case becomes irremediable, and the disclosure of it the more tremendous and overwhelming. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation as in a moment. They are utterly consumed with terrors.

3dly. It is transitory. This is too obvious in view of all that has been said to need further illustration, and yet it is too important to be passed without distinct recognition.

They have their portion in this life : and what is this life ? It is even a vapor which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. They themselves, however, are to exist forever : and having had their good things here, they have no more a portion forever. To-day full of anxiety on account of some unfavorable turn of affairs, or full of exultation at the success of their plans, and to-morrow overwhelmed with horrors at the notice of approaching death, with no preparation for the event, and no power of escape :—all their acquisitions to be relinquished, and remembered by them only as the price at which they sold immortal blessedness. “ O Lord ! deliver my soul from the wicked—from men of the world, which have their portion in this life !”

Who of us, my hearers, belong to the class that is thus described ? Who of us, as distinguished from the people of God, are men of the world ? Whose thoughts tend to the things of this world, and not to the things of God ? Whose feelings are interested, whose desires and regrets, hopes and fears, joys and griefs are excited by worldly incidents and objects, and not by the objects and concerns of the spiritual and eternal world ? Whose converse with kindred minds flows easily and naturally, as water from a fountain, out of the abundance of worldly thoughts and affections within, and not from the fullness of spiritual knowledge and experience ? Whose conduct is decided by respect to the interests, opinions, customs, and friendships of the present world, and not by a regard to God the Redeemer, a judgment to come, and the recompense of the reward ?

Such naturally are we all—and it would be wonderful if many in a congregation like this were not such still—and some who hope and profess to be different. To be really no longer of the world while we are in it ; to be no more governed by its spirit, conformed to its principles, or devoted to its ends ; to be transformed in the renewing of our minds, to be walking by faith, to be living to God ;—looking to things eternal, and setting our affections on things above, is no slight thing ; and to set it down that such is our own experience if we are not conscious that it is really so, is a horrible delusion. A speculative conviction—a transient impression—a hope—a profession—a nominal and even respectable standing in the church, cannot prove that we are not of the world. “ Verify, verily, I say unto you,” is the word of the great Teacher, “ except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Whose experience and life prove him by this standard to be not of the world, but called out of the world ? Whom will Christ acknowledge as such when the world will have passed away, and the lusts thereof ? The test may seem to some of you severe ; but I did not make and I cannot alter it. It is

established by the word of God ; " and who may abide the day of his coming ? "

Have you indeed received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that ye may know the mercies that are freely given you of God ? Then never envy the men of the world however God may fill their bosoms with his treasures. Rather pity them that they have so poor a portion : and the more because they refuse a better—immortal beings choosing a portion in this life—a portion so unsatisfying, embittered with so many anxious cares and tumultuous passions ; affording them so little solace under the ills of life, and leaving them comfortless to the miseries of eternity. O ! let the bowels of your compassion be moved for them, however any of them, in the pride of their elevation, may scorn or tread upon you. Let the consideration of the restlessness of their lives, and the miseries of their end, subdue every feeling of resentment, and turn all repining thoughts into prayers for their repentance ; and above all constrain you so to live as to convince them that you believe there is a better portion, and have made choice of it. And oh ! " Ye men of the world"—

—Ye hungry, starving souls,
That feed upon the wind,
And vainly strive with earthly toys
To fill the immortal mind—

I exhort you to consider these things.

My object in urging them I freely acknowledge is to make you unhappy ; to make you discontented with your portion ; to make you dissatisfied with yourselves—for unless you become so, in this world, you will be so most intensely and desperately in the next. Until you are utterly and absolutely dissatisfied to be men of the world, you will never be in earnest for a change. Cleaving to a portion here, you will be careless of a portion hereafter. I pray you, therefore, think of these things ; and if they make you unhappy, let them put you upon seeking a happiness which they will not disturb. If there is any truth or importance in these things ; if you have any concern in them ; if the things which await you as accountable and immortal beings make haste, and you have any thing to do that you may secure a good part, that shall not be taken from you—a treasure in the heavens that will not fail—then I entreat you think on these things. If you find it difficult to think on them—to get deep and influential impressions of them, be the more alarmed at your state, strive the more earnestly, with the more determined purpose, and the more agonizing prayerfulness against the worldliness that is destroying you, think on these things—think on them till they have the character of realities in your minds—think on them till you feel and act in regard to them, as your reason and conscience approve.

These, indeed, are not the only things that claim your earnest thoughts. Were there no other, I would not have said a word to you of them. Were there not a better portion—a portion large as your desires, and lasting as the mind, I would leave you cleaving to the world while you can enjoy it.

But, "See," is the call of God himself, "I have set before you life and death—therefore choose life that you may live." He offers himself to be your Portion, and calls upon you to choose him as such. He demands that you give him your hearts, and promises that he will be your God. He invites you to make his service your delight, and engages to make your wants his care. Though you are sinful, he calls you to his throne of grace, confessing your sins, and promises freely for Christ's sake to forgive you. Though you are blind and weak, and tempted, he bids you come to him, and he in Christ will be your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Will you then hesitate? Will you put your trust in this vain world, and not in the God who made and redeemed you? Will you set your affections on those things that are on the earth, and not on those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God? Will you turn your backs on the proffered love of the Infinite God, and the melting invitation of a bleeding Saviour, and the everlasting glories of his heavenly kingdom, that you may spend your inch of time in the lust of the flesh—the lust of the eyes and the pride of life? Oh! come this day—this hour obey the persuasive call. Come—come yield yourselves to God. Say, What have I to do any more with idols? Lord, I give myself to thee. Truly I am thy servant—I am thy servant. Thou hast loosed my bonds.

SERMON DCXXXI.

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THE PORTION OF THE SAINTS.

"Thou art my portion, O Lord."—PSALM cxix. 57.

So said Holy David. So ought we every one to be prepared to say. To every living man God offers himself in the Gospel as his portion, and it is the highest duty as it is also the highest felicity of every one to accept the offer. To impress you with this, I would show *in what sense God is the portion of his people, and how as such he is distinguished from every other portion.*

I. In what sense God is the portion of his people. The *portion* of any one is that on which he depends for his happiness; the object of his highest delight and confidence; his chief good. Moses, speaking of the division of the earth by the Most High among the posterity of Noah after the deluge, says, that this was done with reference to his design of establishing the people of Israel in the land of Canaan; and he assigns this as the reason: "For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance"—a form of expression truly remarkable. That God should be the portion of His people is not wonderful, except on account of his condescension in sustaining to them such a relation. Being offered to them in this relation, it is most reasonable that they receive and regard him accordingly. But that they should be his portion—the portion of Him "who is before all things, and by whom all things consist," and therefore can neither need them nor receive any thing from them, may well excite our admiration. But when we consider that they are the only part of mankind who are voluntarily subservient to his praise, and whom he *can* regard with delight, the declaration, though not on that account the less gracious, is more intelligible. Though all the world is his, the children of Israel were, and the church of the redeemed now is, separated by his grace, from the rest of mankind, especially for his service and praise; and as such is the object of his peculiar delight, his "treasure," his "inheritance," his "portion." "Know ye, that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself." So among men, although one may have other possessions, that which he especially depends upon and values, is his portion. It may be his farm, or the emolument of his office, or his treasures; or it may be a friend, parent, husband, guardian, child. There is a widow desolate and poor. She has neither house, nor land, nor treasure—nothing of this kind that she can call her own. But she has an only son; he is of age, and is all that her hopes had promised—dutiful, healthful, active, prudent, successful. He, under God, is her provider and protector, her solace and joy. He is her earthly portion—a portion better than houses, or lands, or gold, since he is not only all *that* to her which these could be, and without the care of them, but as he is a partaker of the same intelligent and immortal nature with herself, and bound to her by ties that are peculiar to that nature. In him she has a delight which only mind in mind is capable of enjoying, and this, as the case may be, although he is far from her sight, on the other side of the globe, and communicating with her only in such methods as society has established. You may well imagine how peculiarly she regards him; how much he is present to her in thought; how affectionately he dwells in her heart; with what delight she leans upon him; how satisfied she is with her lot, so far as earthly things can give satisfaction, while she knows of his welfare, and what a

wilderness the world would be to her were she to hear of his death. All this you understand; and you have only to put the living God in the place of such an earthly friend, that you may as well understand in what sense God is the portion of his people.

"The Lord appeared unto Abraham in a vision, saying, Fear not, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Observe the form of this language. It is much more than saying, "I ensure thee protection, and will give thee a reward." It imports that he himself, the Almighty God, would be his protection and reward, interposing himself between Abraham and every threatening danger, and becoming himself the object of his complete and everlasting joy. To the same purpose he afterwards revealed himself to Abraham as the *Almighty*, that is, the All-sufficient God—and commanding him to walk before him and be perfect, subjoined, "As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Whatever he was in himself as God, that he would be to Abraham and his seed. He would be "their God;" his wisdom would be theirs to guide and counsel them; his power would be theirs to protect and succor them; his goodness would be theirs to supply and comfort them; his dominion would be theirs to overrule all things for their good; and the glories of his infinite nature would be theirs to satisfy their eternal confidence and delight. The condition of the promise *was*, that they should walk before him, and be *perfect*, not in the sense of sinlessness, but of sincerity: that they should truly and practically acknowledge him as their God, should worship and glorify him, live as under his eye, aim in all things to please him, and be constant and unreserved in their belief of his word and obedience to his will.

These promises of God are made in Christ to all believers. "For is he God of the Jews only? Is he not the God of the Gentiles also? Yes, of the Gentiles also, seeing it is one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith." The end of Christ in giving himself for us, the just, for the unjust, was to bring us to God; and this is attained when in our justification through him his God becomes ours. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant which I made in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the house of Egypt, because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord. I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall no more teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord, for all shall know him from the least unto the greatest. For I will be merci-

ful to their unrighteousness, and their iniquities will I remember no more." Such is the covenant of grace, established through Jesus Christ, with every believer according to the Gospel, by which Abraham's God becomes his God, his shield, and exceeding great reward—his present and eternal portion.

The condition of the promise is faith in God as thus revealed; the Almighty, Most Holy, and Most Merciful Lord and Judge of his people; faith in Christ as the atoning sacrifice, the accepted Mediator, the Divine and sufficient Redeemer of those who come unto God by Him; that faith by which a sinner, a rebel, becomes as Abraham was, "the friend of God," yields himself to him, depends upon him and walks before him as his Father and God, with the governing desire and purpose of obeying and serving him. Or it is choice of him as thus revealed, faith consisting most essentially in our receiving and depending upon him, as in Christ freely offered to be our God. With this intent, Joshua said to the assembled tribes at Shechem, "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt, and serve ye the Lord; and if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." And to the same purpose the Apostle to the Gentiles said, "We then are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

You see then, in what sense God is the portion of his people, and how he becomes their portion. He is such as he is their God, or, in the more expressive language of the covenant, he is a God *to* them, whatever he is in himself that he is to them for their protection and happiness, and he becomes such to them on their believing in him for this purpose, or their choice of him, and cleaving to him, in the rejection of all rival and incompatible objects.

This last particular, *believing* in him, or *choosing* and *cleaving* to him, as offered in the Gospel, may need some farther illustration, a mistake here being fatal. Let me then call your attention to it in a few distinct remarks:

1st. Taking God for our portion, we make him the object of our supreme desire. We are endowed with susceptibilities of enjoyment from other objects. They were made to be *enjoyed*, and of course to be desired. But we naturally fix on these our supreme—our governing desire. We love the creature more than the creator. Thus alienated from the living God, we go knocking at the door of every idol temple, asking, "Who will show us any good?" But coming to ourselves we learn the folly of this. We feel the vanity of earthly good as a portion for a dying accountable being. We are also convinced of the extreme sinfulness of this—the guilt of a reasonable, moral being, with

the knowledge of God, preferring to him the creatures which he has made; we are impressed with his claims to our affections, and fear his just wrath for our sin; and, seeing the way opened for our return to him, we admire the wisdom, holiness, and grace of the provision, and, confiding in his overtures, we every one say, "What have I to do with idols? Lo, we are of the generation that seek after God; to know and glorify him, to enjoy his presence and favor, and be conformed to his holiness; to do his will and be assured of everlasting nearness to him and communion with him; to have "this God for our guide until death, and our God for ever and ever," is in our view, the substance of all good. The sentiment of our hearts is that of David: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on the earth that I desire beside thee." "As the heart panteth for the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God—the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?"

2d. Taking God for our portion, we make him the object of our ultimate confidence. Fixing on him our supreme desire, we are assured by him that he will meet and satisfy that desire. "Because he hath set his love on me," is his word to us in that case, "therefore will I deliver him. I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him, I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and show him my salvation." Believing the promise, we make him our confidence according to it, we depend on his wisdom to guide, his power to protect, and his goodness to forgive, to sanctify, to sustain, and eternally bless us; and, in this confidence, we surrender ourselves to the disposal of his providence and the guidance of his word. There is indeed a subordinate confidence due to other objects, as voluntary agents in his kingdom, and means of his goodness, but on him as the source of all which they receive, is our ultimate dependence. God is our refuge and strength; to Him we repair, and pour out our hearts in every thing; by prayer and supplication we make known to him our requests, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding keeps our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.

3d. Taking God for our portion we rest in him as our chief joy. It is not the part of true religion to despise common blessings. They are given to be enjoyed; and when received religiously with thanksgiving, certainly they are not on that account enjoyed the less. Christians enjoy their family connections, their social circles, and all the circumstances of comfort and of privilege not less, but far more, than those whose portion is in this life. It is not by their disrelish of earthly good, they are weaned from the world, but by their superior enjoyment of God. Tenderly as they love their friends, and pleased as they may be with the other gifts of Providence, they love God more; and proportioned to their love to him, and their confidence in him, is their

enjoyment of him. If the possession or expectation of any good gives joy, and proportioned to its apprehended value, what must be supposed to be the joy of those who carry with them the blessed assurance that the living God is their God. There may be less of rapture and ecstasy in their joy, but how much more of stability and satisfaction ! in the sense of his presence and glory, in the exercises of communion with him, and the work of serving and glorifying him ; in the consciousness of his smiles, and the assurance that he will be their God forever and ever ; they have a peace which passeth understanding. Are they in prosperity ? they say, " Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us, for thou hast put joy and gladness into our hearts more than in the time that their corn and their wine are increased." Are they in affliction ? they say, " Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall there be fruit in the vine, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." " They joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom they have received the atonement, and therefore they rejoice in Christ also, with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Thus the Lord, the living God as revealed in Christ, the covenant God of his people, and as received by them according to his offers, becomes their portion, the object of their choice, their supreme desire, confidence, and joy.

All this, as I hardly need to say, is attended with imperfection, of which, in the trials of life, they are painfully conscious. Too much are their desires, their confidence, and their joy engaged by worldly things, or at least too feebly and inconstantly are they centred in God. Still he is the object of their supreme affections. He, in distinction from all inferior good, is their portion. I would now show :

II. *How as such he is distinguished from every other portion.*

1st. God is the only *sufficient* portion. There is no other of which we can say in the possession of it, " We have all and abound." The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing. Riches cannot supply all want, nor honor fill all desires, nor pleasure dispel all anxiety and woe. There is no earthly friend that is adorned with all the excellence, or that is possessed of all the resources, or whose love and friendship have all the constancy and permanency, or on whom we may depend for counsel, sympathy, and support, with all the security that we might desire. The created universe, were it at our command, would be insufficient to meet our wants, as sinful and accountable ; and, apart from the good will of Him on whom it depends, is of no account. Creatures the most excellent, as objects of

ultimate confidence, like the idols of the heathen, are vanity ; "in the day of his visitation they perish." "The portion of Jacob is not like them. He is the former of all things, the Lord of Hosts is his name." He who has this Glorious Being for his friend and portion, has all things. He has all the good which creatures are capable of affording him ; for under the government of God, "all things shall work together for good, to them that love him ;" and in God he has infinitely more than all "that he can desire or comprehend :" power, wisdom, goodness, dominion, honor, and glory, infinite and eternal, for all these are engaged to make him blessed. There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heavens in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He, and only He, is sufficient for us, and particularly as the God of our salvation, to forgive our sins, redeem our souls, and bring us, ransomed from the grave and from hell, to that perfection in body and in spirit—that exceeding and eternal blessedness in himself that will fill and satisfy our expanding desires forever.

2d. God is the only *sure* portion. Whatever else we may desire is uncertain in the attainment, as well as insufficient in the possession. But few, after all their toil, attain the prize of riches : fewer still are extensively known in the heraldry of fame ; of the votaries of pleasure also, what multitudes there are who "mourn at the last when their flesh and body are consumed ;" and in our earthly friends, as well as possessions, how variously we are liable to disappointment ! What indeed are the eager multitudes who are seeking happiness in worldly things, but, according to the description given of them by the prophet, "as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth ; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty ; or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold he drinketh ; but he awaketh, and his soul hath appetite ?" But how different is the case of those who seek their happiness in God ! Here "every one that seeketh findeth." Here is a portion as sure in the possession, to those who make choice of it, as it is sufficient in the enjoyment. It costs nothing. The poor may have it as well as the rich ; for there is no respect of persons with God. The greatest number may enjoy it as freely and as surely as the least. There is no occasion for competition in the pursuit of it, except that of loving one another, as Christ hath loved us, nor for fear of exhaustion on account of the multitudes who apply ; for with God is the fountain of life—"in his presence is fullness of joy—and at his right hand are pleasures forever more." The most *sinful and miserable*, as well as the most poor and destitute, are welcome ; for "the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." Their miseries move his compassion ; iniquities he waits freely to forgive ; and his word is pledged that whosoever will may come and take of the water of

life freely. "Ho, every one that thirsteth," the call is, "come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat —yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not ? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me ; hear and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

3d. God is the only *unfailing* portion. Riches make to themselves wings as an eagle, and fly away. Honor is not less fleeting. Friends also sicken and die; and we ourselves are frail, as are the earthly objects of our confidence. "All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The wind passeth over it and it is gone." But God is the same. Unchangeable in himself, he is unchangeably the portion of those who make him their trust. Their choice of him is a fruit of his own everlasting love to them, and therefore he binds them to himself in cords of love, that will endure to everlasting. They have chosen him as their portion forever, and the covenant of his grace, in which he engages himself to them, provides that it shall be according to their choice. Never shall they depart from him, and never will he leave or forsake them. He will be their guide until death. Here is the crowning excellence of the believer's portion—that while it is large as his desires, it is lasting as the soul. The worldling lies down upon the bed of death, and with despairing apprehensions waits the sentence, "Son, remember that thou in thy life-time hadst thy good things." The Christian lies down, and says, "My flesh and my heart fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

In application of these thoughts, let me propose two inquiries.

1st. Who of you can truly say as David did—"Thou art my portion, O Lord." To you, in the condescension of his grace, he offers himself, as he was offered to David for this purpose ; and with clearer light, and more abundant love, in Christ, as God manifest in the flesh, the propitiation for our sins, risen from the dead, making intercession for us, and bringing life and immortality to light ; and, from the first moment of your capacity, has never ceased to invite you to receive him as your Saviour and Lord. But have you listened to his voice ? Have you acceded to his proposals ? Have you turned from idols to the living God ? Is he above all others the object of your desire ? the knowledge of him, above all other knowledge ; communion with him, above all other communion ; the adorning of his holiness, above all other adorning ; the guidance of his counsel, above all other guidance ; employment in his service, above all other employment ; salvation through grace, above all other salvation ; and his favor, through the blood of the cross, above the favor of the

universe beside? Do you depend on him, according to his word, to meet these desires—to guide you by his counsel, enlighten you by his Spirit, sustain you by his providence, comfort you with his presence, and save you by his grace; and, in this confidence, do you repair to him in your wants, cast your burdens on his arm, and commit yourselves to his disposing hand? Desiring him above all other objects of desire, do you depend on him to be to you what you desire? and, depending on him, do you rejoice in him above all other objects of rejoicing; and do you show that this is the case, by your serenity of mind when worldly delights fail you, and by your voluntary surrender of worldly interests when these come into competition with his will? When David said, "Thou art my portion, O Lord," he added, as the consequence of his choice and the proof of his sincerity, "*I have said that I will keep thy words.*" Have you the same evidence of sincerity? Can you say to him in sincerity and truth, "*I will keep thy words?*" Here, after all, is the decisive test of our real desires. Jesus said, "*If a man love me, he will keep my words. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings.*" Whom, according to this test, have we for our portion? What object gains our active obedience—our devoted service—God or mammon?

2d. Who of you will now make the choice of David, and say, "Thou art my portion, O ~~Lord~~." Many persons, at one time or another, in view of such considerations as I have now presented to you, have done this—many who before had taken up with a portion in this life—and you all have the same need of doing this as they had, and are under the same obligation. And will you hesitate whether the living God or this world shall be your portion? He is willing to be yours, and his terms are not hard. Though you have rejected and offended him, still the overture is "*Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord.*" And are you immortal beings, within a few years to take a final leave of all things below, and enter on a state of eternal retribution, and have you now the opportunity of securing in the friendship of God, a blessed immortality, and will you refuse his friendship? Think of the guilt as well as the folly of this—the immeasurable guilt of treating with this neglect and ingratitude, the God who formed, and the Saviour who died for you; of turning your backs on his invitations, hardening your hearts under his calls, trampling under foot his precious blood, contemning his authority, his justice, his grace, and in this manner, not only cutting yourselves off from the inheritance of the just, but ensuring to yourselves a portion with unbelievers in eternal sorrow. Why will any of you do this? Why will you die? Most assuredly the hour is on the wing, when you will feel this world to be as fleeting and vain as you now know it to be—when God, as the portion of the soul, will appear to you to be as useful, and without him will be found to be as miserable,

as your consciences now admonish you is the truth of the case. Why then will you not obey the truth? Why will you not yield to this first law of heaven? "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Why will you not arise and go to your Father? Your opportunity will not always remain. To some of you it may be closed soon. Soon death may come, and then there will be no space for repentance. Consider these things, O ye who are living without God in the world I have set before you this day life and death, the portion of the men of this world, and the portion of the saints. The one or the other of these will be the final portion of every one, and the choice of every one in his own case will have decided it. Now, then, compare them, and choose for yourselves. They are before you, and now let reason and conscience decide. May you know in this your day the things which belong to your peace! God is waiting—Christ is interceding—the Spirit is pleading—and all heaven cries, "O that they were wise—that they understood this—that they would consider their latter end!"

GOD OUR PORTION HERE AND HEREAFTER.

God my supporter and my Hope,
My Help forever near,
Thine arm of mercy held me up,
When sinking in despair.

Thy counsels, Lord, shall guide my feet
Through this dark wilderness;
Thine hand conduct me near thy seat,
To dwell before thy face.

Were I in heaven without my God,
'Twould be no joy to me;
And while this earth is my abode,
I long for none but thee.

What if the springs of life were broke,
And flesh and heart should faint,
God is my soul's eternal Rock,
The Strength of every saint.

Behold, the sinners, that remove
Far from thy presence, die;
Not all the idol gods they love
Can save them when they cry.

But to draw near to thee, my God,
Shall be my sweet employ;
My tongue shall sound thy works abroad,
And tell the world my joy.

SERMON DCXXXII.

BY REV. DAVID DOBIE,

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FEAR OF CONTAGION AND DISEASE.

"Every house is shut up that no man may come in."—ISAIAH xxiv. 10.

FROM the context it would seem these words are intended to describe the state of things in a city during a famine, or the prevalence of some very fatal and contagious disease. At such times there is a state of feeling, common to all, which it may be profitable to study, that we may the better ascertain the restraints whereby it ought to be controlled. We read of those who take no precautions against the pestilence, even when it is raging with terrible destructiveness. They satisfy themselves with saying, that if they are decreed to die by the plague, they will so die—it is the will of God! But this is an exception to the common sense of the world. Acting on the natural love of life, which God has implanted within them, men are generally disposed to avoid disease, and every evil whereby their health or life may be endangered.

The wisdom of this law of self-preservation is very manifest. If it were not a law of man's nature, and if mankind were not every hour more or less under its influence, there would be scenes of woe, even in this miserable world, which, in all its wretchedness, it has never so much as imagined. The Creator foresaw this when he made man; and he made self-preservation one of the primary laws of his being—one of the most sacred, necessary, and useful laws of the human mind. It is the divinely sanctioned principle which underlies all human laws—the basis of all right enactments protecting health, reputation, property, and life in the body politic. And it is because God approves of the principle, that his approval extends to these enactments, and the authority by which they are enforced: "Whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." Thus God throws his shield over the life and well being of his creature: and whoever undermines my health, blasts my reputation, invades my property, or endangers my life—commits an offence which God will avenge. This law is also a guide in respect to pursuits in life. It teaches what to adopt and what to avoid. Any pursuit, the legitimate tendency of which is adverse to the health or morals of men, is essentially bad, through the force of this law. The trade in intoxicating liquor comes under this condemnation. It is properly of the nature of suicide; and there is no more wisdom in granting it license than there is in allowing a madman to possess the instruments by which he will take his own life, or that of his keeper. It is a trade to be prohibited and put down, as we would extinguish a conflagration and punish the incendiary. It is also worthy of remark that the law of self-preservation is the basis of all encouragements given to science—especially to the science of preventing and healing disease. Every discovery and improvement in medical skill

is so much more towards the preservation of human life, and is hailed with satisfaction by all. The same thing is true of education and the diffusion of knowledge. By these means men's minds are enlightened and aroused to avoid whatever is noxious to health and life.

Heathenism places little value on human life. The same thing has been observed in reference to infidelity, whose reign was the reign of murder. To the praise of Christianity be it recorded, that one of its invariable influences, in all lands, is to throw around life a sacred inviolability, not to be removed, save in the most desperate extremity. He that attacks life, attacks the very foundation on which society is built. Life ranks first among things to be protected. Every man feels that there are good reasons for this from the very instincts of nature. Both reason and revelation show that life is man's most sacred interest; and this is the ground on which precautions against contagion and disease are justifiable. No instruction or persuasion is necessary in such circumstances; an intimation that men are in danger is enough; you need not persuade them to "*shut up the house* that no man may come in." Let them know that contagion is in their path, and they will quickly flee. The very face of their friend will be a terror to them. They will not inhale the faintest breath. It was imposed upon lepers in ancient times, on approaching any person not afflicted with their disease, to cry, "Unclean! unclean!" as the condition of their being permitted to live. Men are everywhere alive to the instincts which enacted that ancient law. Let the plague break out, and what a sensation is produced. What trembling at the bare possibility of being exposed! What abstinence from former gratifications! What suspicion in every look! What scrupulous precautions, such as at other times would hardly be endured! It is necessary to see this state of things, to know the full extent of what men will do. Business is suspended. The once thronged streets are still as the grave. Music ceases in the halls of the rich. Mirth is reproved, where once it was a virtue. Every man thinks how he may for a certainty preserve himself from the breath of the destroyer. The precious bonds of society verily seem on the eve of dissolution. How thankful we ought to be that such seasons visit us but very seldom. Yet they do come, and we are compelled to know what it is to dread contagion. As this dread may easily become inordinate, and lead to the very evils which it seeks to shun, it is the object of the present discourse to point out some of the principles by which it should be controlled.

I. The fear of contagion and disease should never be indulged without the distinct recognition that disease and all its causes are under the immediate and all-wise superintendence of God. Unless we bear this in mind, our fear will certainly overstep its proper limits. If we lose sight of the great fact that God reigns and rules over all that pertains to life and its continuance, we must of necessity do wrong, by rushing into conduct and sentiments also, wholly at variance with the honor of God and hurtful to our own peace. A sense of His presence and an assurance of His protecting hand is especially needful when death has entered our windows; when the pestilence is abroad, destroying its thousands—filling every house with fear, lamentation and woe. Our fear of contagion is instinctive, and springs from the law of self-preservation implanted within us, and it is

therefore not to be wholly suppressed, but it should always be moderated with the assurance that all the resources of wisdom and power are at God's command, and that he can defend and save us from disease and from all its causes. On this point we ought not to entertain a moment's doubt. "I will say of the Lord, He is my fortress ; my God, in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust : his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that fieth by day ; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand ; but it shall not come nigh thee."

II. The fear of contagion should never interfere with the duties of humanity. The infirm should be cared for ; the aged and the young protected ; the sick should be ministered to ; the dead buried ; and those in danger, faithfully warned. All this is required by the golden rule, of doing to others as we would they should do to us. When exposed to disease, we would wish those acquainted with the fact to warn us of our danger ; when attacked with sickness, we would wish some friend to come to our aid ; when sinking into the grave, overcome and vanquished by the great enemy, we would even then desire to be comforted—if but with the kind look of a fellow mortal ; all this therefore ought we to render others in the day of their extremity. Life itself must be sometimes, not only offered, but actually sacrificed, on the altar of benevolence ; for God has made it our duty to live, only in the discharge of duty. Life, indeed, is not to be recklessly thrown away, where there is no prospect of good being accomplished ; but where disease is raging, every dictate of humanity demands that we attend the sick at every hazard. The case is the same where our friends are perishing in the waters, or in the fire ; humanity requires that we make every exertion to save them, even at the risk of our own lives.

III. When the fear of contagion exceeds the fear of sin, then it is certainly inordinate and wrong. This must be manifest on a moment's reflection. Sin is the most dreadful evil in the universe. There is in truth no evil but itself. Sin alone provokes the wrath of God. But for sin, we might bid farewell to all our fears—all our sorrows would be but for a moment. Free from sin, we might welcome disease and death itself with joy. How glad the message, by which we are called into the presence of God and all the realities of eternity ! If on the other hand we are still involved in its guilt and condemnation, how dreadful beyond expression is everything connected with the day of our death—since we are in danger of eternal ruin. But on what ground can we justify ourselves in being more afraid of disease than sin ? in trembling at the thought of being exposed to sickness, while the breaking of the commandments of God gives us comparatively no concern ? in shutting up the sick that they may not go out, and yet not standing in any dread of doing that which deliberately provokes the wrath of God ? Let us treat things according to their merits. If sin is the greatest of all evils, then let us so regard it, and conduct ourselves accordingly. Let us ascertain from the most patient in-

vestigation, whether the infected chamber of a sick person is not more terrible to us than the unholy home of mirth and ungodliness; whether the dread of taking a disease is not more active in us than the dread of living impenitent without faith in Christ. Here is a good test of our principles—a safe criterion of our actual standing in the sight of God. Would we, as by instinct, put our hand to our mouth and hold our breath, in presence of disease, and immediately throw open our whole hearts to the influence of a moral leper, a man whose heart and life are at enmity with God? This is entirely a fair question. Do not the highest interests of our souls demand that we should prove ourselves in some such way as this? We assuredly know enough of the deceitfulness of our hearts to be already aware of the danger to which we are exposed from this very quarter. What if, on investigation, we should find that we regard contagion a more dreadful thing than the violation of the will of God? Would it be a piety worthy of the gospel if it placed the safety of the body above the glory of God? Would any of us feel prepared for the scrutiny of the last judgment, if our devotion to our Saviour rose no higher—that we would flee from infection at the first warning, and yet show no willingness to turn from sin, even at his command? But is there not good reason to believe that many who profess to believe in Christ and in the solemn realities of a coming eternity, who maintain that sin is the only evil to be shunned, are yet very inconsistent when placed in proximity to some contagious and prevailing disease? When the wind blows from an infected house, they are thrown into a panic at their danger; and yet the same persons may be found at their ease, yea, in very great self-complacency and joy, in the midst of a theatre, surrounded with, and breathing an atmosphere of spiritual death!

Now we would not deride the fear of contagion; on the contrary, it is dictated by the great first law of self-preservation; and therefore constitutional and right in its proper degree. We would not argue for presumption, when the pestilence is in the land. But we would insist that Christians at least, who show more fear of infection than of moral evil, give the world but little reason to regard them sincere in their professions of supreme devotion to the Great Master. We would insist, that as sin is a greater evil than disease of body, so it ought to command in us a corresponding dread. From its terrible contagion we should instinctively shrink, as from the horrible verge of hell. What is this fear of disease, which so soon arouses every soul in the population of a crowded city as with the blast of a trumpet, but the dread of going into the presence of God to render up an account of our deeds? And would we cherish such a state of mind were we really at peace with God, living in all good conscience in the keeping of his commandments? Would the bare mention of the plague all but quench our faith in the providence and goodness of God, if we were longing to be with God in the blessed fellowship of heaven? If sin were seen by us in its true character; if we entertained proper views of God's feelings towards it; if we would allow ourselves to understand its effect upon our own happiness—would we so easily err, in preferring sin to affliction?

In conclusion, we may learn,

1. That our duty to God takes precedence of every other duty. Such is the order signified in the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,

with all thy heart ; and thy neighbor as thyself." In all times of special exposure to sickness and death, this sentiment ought to be engraven on our hearts.

2. All inordinate fear of disease is wrong, and therefore to be avoided as a transgression of the law of God. Such fear distrusts the goodness of God—disregards the duties which we owe to others—and is at variance even with our own health and welfare. We ought therefore by all means to guard against this sin.

3. A heart right with God is the best preparation for every event. If our heart be right with God, it will be at peace with our fellow men—it will be full of faith in Christ, and of comfort in the Holy Spirit—it will be humble, resigned, and happy. This is an asylum for every hour of danger—once fairly in it, no evil can befall us. Those whom the Lord keeps are perfectly safe. "Blessed are all they who put their trust in Him." O let his solemn voice, in these times of death, be heard in our inmost souls ! It is an awful warning which his providence is now giving us all. Though it seems to speak in severity, it speaks in love. It bids us remember our latter end—the vanity of all earthly pursuits—the certainty of death—and the retributions of the judgment day. It bids the wavering to decide ; the backslider to return to God ; the impenitent to repent ; the Christian to watch ; for no man knoweth "what a day may bring forth."

4. We ought not to murmur against God. Alas ! did he deal with us according to our sins, we should all be cut down as cumberers of the ground. Look at the obligations which have been laid upon us in the gospel of Christ, and how wretchedly we have fulfilled them ; at the temporal blessings conferred upon us, and how we have abused them ; at the patience and compassion which God has so long shown towards us—the years of forbearance and mercy which he has given us to enjoy, and how thoughtlessly we have allowed them to run to waste ! Instead of preparing to die, we have too often done the very opposite—we have made ourselves unfit to live. Let us not murmur, then, if God comes forth in his inscrutable sovereignty and teaches us the great lesson that our life is in his hands, and that he will recall it when it shall please him so to do. Be this the willing sentiment of every heart—"Thy will, O God, be done, on earth as it is in heaven." My life I place at thy disposal ; that it may be consecrated for ever in all its powers to thy service grant through Jesus Christ, my Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.